

the scene, is foreign to Western medicine and should be regarded as a separate part of "Traditional Chinese Medicine." This separation has produced little but confusion and stalemate in Nevada where a separate Board of Chinese Medicine has been established by the legislature.

The fact of the matter is that acupuncture has been very much a part of American medicine for over a hundred years. The first written report advocating acupuncture in the American literature appeared in the Southern Medical and Surgical Journal in August, 1836, and this was followed later by a report of acupuncture in the Journal of the American Medical Association on October 16, 1897. Sir William Osler was also quite familiar with acupuncture, and it is worth recalling the comments from his classic text, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*: "For lumbago acupuncture is, in acute cases, the most efficient treatment. Needles of from three to four inches in length (ordinary bonnet-needles, sterilized, will do) are thrust into the lumbar muscles at the seat of pain, and withdrawn after five or ten minutes. In many instances the relief is immediate, and I can corroborate fully the statements of Ringer, who taught me this practice, as to its extraordinary and prompt efficacy in many instances."

Even if one attempts to argue that acupuncture has been neglected and by default is no longer a part of "modern" Western medicine, the increasing interest of the American medical profession and the widespread activity of research centers (from the National Institutes of Health to the medical school campus) refute this argument. The complaint further states: "The practice of acupuncture is so unrelated to modern medicine that medical school training and other related study, and the practice of modern medicine, has furnished no experience, competence or expertise at all for the practice of acupuncture." This is not true since interested medical students, interns and residents, and physicians in practice are increasingly able to obtain experience, competence and adequate expertise in the practice of acupuncture, well within the scope of modern medicine. It would be a tragic mistake to have the courts of this state mistakenly view acupuncture as separate

and distinct from the principles and practice of medicine in the traditional and legal sense.

The attorneys also refer to the "normal, natural right as physicians to employ, refer, associate or use other technically trained people" (i.e., the right to use the non-licensed acupuncturist). Although I am a strong supporter of paramedical personnel and their utilization in medical practice, I am reluctant to rush needles into their hands with too much haste, and I am even more reluctant to have a whole new category of paramedical personnel whose only skill is acupuncture and whose only long-term contribution to health care is totally limited to principles and practices from the past. We must indeed learn from the past, but we must also be prepared to adapt and integrate the past into current practice and future planning.

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### "Backlash"—A Correction

TO THE EDITOR: I wonder if you would be so kind as to publish this letter to rectify an inadvertent error in my recent article entitled "Backlash" appearing in *California Medicine* 119:76-83, Oct 1973.

In that article I stated that the number of applicants for positions in medical school this year was 70,000. The figure that was intended, was 40,000.

Actually, the last year for which I currently have hard data was the entering class in the fall of 1972 when there were 37,000 applicants for 13,570 first-year enrollments. It is my understanding that the figure has risen a good deal since then but I do not have solid evidence that it ever went as high as 70,000 and a more conservative figure would be 40,000.

In any event, the main point remains unchanged, namely, that despite all the criticisms leveled at American medicine, it is still very attractive to young people.

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